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The Daily Gazetteer.

MONDAY, MAY 21. 1739.

№ 1219.

REMARKS *on the Tragedy of* GUSTAVUS VASA: *In a* LETTER *to the* AUTHOR.

SIR,

THE Qualifications neceſſary in an Author who undertakes to write a *Tragedy*, are ſo many, and ſo rarely met with, that tho' the Delicacy of the preſent Age renders it an arduous Task to *write* ſo as to *ſucceed*, yet the Detection of *ſome Miſtakes*, and many *leſſer Errors*, ought not to be eſteemed ſo much an Argument againſt a Gentleman's Fitneſs for that kind of Writing, as an Endeavour to guard him from Inadvertencies of the ſame kind in any future Attempt; tho' every Man is not capable of accepting ſuch Services with the Candour they merit.

In this View I ſhall offer you my free Thoughts on your Tragedy of *Guſtavus*; for though your Conduct with reſpect to that Play has render'd them in ſome Meaſure neceſſary for the Publick; it is you will have the greateſt Cauſe to *accept* my Labour, however unwilling you may be to *thank* me for it. —— Nor do I believe I ſhould have prevailed upon myſelf to have cenſured at all, what you, and your very officious Friend Mr. *Ogle*, take ſo much Pains to ſkreen under the ſlender Apology of its being a *firſt Attempt*, had not the Buſtle made on its Behalf by ſome of the moſt aſſiduous Advocates of your Caſe, preposſeſſed myſelf, and many more, with an Expectation of ſomething as extraordinary in the Compoſition, as in the Methods taken toward uſhering it to the Publick, and the unaccountable Clamour raiſed upon its meeting with a Prohibition, which, according to your own Knowledge, and that of every Man who has given any Attention to Dramatick Affairs, every Writer has Cauſe to expect, ſince every Writer's Sentiment of his own Performance may reaſonably enough be ſuppoſed the ſame, however they may differ in Point of real Merit. —— And with reſpect to this *Tragedy* being the *firſt* you have offered the Publick, it may not be amiſs to obſerve, that more than one Half of our moſt celebrated Plays have been the firſt Pieces written by their reſpective Authors; and ſuch Attention has always been given to the *firſt Dawning* of a Dramatick Genius, that we have had few Examples of any conſiderable Improvement of *Flight* and *Imagination* in ſubſequent Pieces, however they may have mended in Point of Style, Method and Decorum; which is eaſily accounted for, from the Aptneſs of every Writer, to exhauſt his *moſt favourite Sentiments*, *Phraſes* and *Ideas*, which are ever moſt perfect, as well as moſt natural in his firſt Attempt.

I have before ſaid, and I now repeat it, that your Play ſeems calculated for *other Purpoſes* than that of pleaſing and entertaining the Judges of *Dramatick Compoſition*; which being allowed, would plead much in your Favour, with Regard to your Defects in Writing; for where a Gentleman ſits down to write with one *View* only, however unnatural or unjuſt that View may be, however foreign to his Subject, or out of the Reach of his Knowledge and Capacity, it is not ſtrange to find every *other Conſideration* fly before it. —— This is ſo evident in the Caſe of *Guſtavus*, that in order to make the Rabble appear *Friends of Liberty*, *Sons of Freedom*, *Foes to Slavery*, &c. you have, with an uncommon Complaiſance, made each Man of them, without Diſtinction, a *Patriot*; a glaring Inſtance of your mean Compliance to the Uſe lately made of that venerable Name; for had you conſidered Things in any *other Light* than that of a *modern* Patriot, or, rather, a Pretender to the Name, you muſt have known that no buskin'd Rant whatever can require *every Man* to be what ſcarce *ſix* in an *Age* were ever found; ſince, whatever may be the Sentiments of you and your Friends of this Matter, to conſtitute a Patriot ſomewhat more is neceſſary than a mere joining the Cry of Liberty raiſed by another, and bellowing for Freedom out of a *Fondneſs* for the *Sound*, more than from a *Senſe* of *Oppreſſion*.

Having premiſed this in general, I ſhall offer you a few Remarks on your Performance; which you will eaſily perceive to be the Production of a curſory Peruſal, rather than of a critical Inſpection, which I found the leſs neceſſary, as enough appeared on the firſt View to confirm my Opinion of its Deficiency of Poetick Merit, being one principal Cauſe of your relying ſo much on its Force of another Kind.

The happy Choice of a Subject has often ſupported a Tragedy, which, without that Advantage, could never have reach'd a *ſecond* Repreſentation, as is manifeſt in thoſe of *Banks*, &c. but then in thoſe Inſtances it happens that the Story is *underſtood*, the *moſt remarkable Incidents known in Hiſtory*, and the *Cataſtrophe* a *moving* and *intereſting Fact*, which with many, and eſpecially with the leſs-diſcerning Claſs of Spectators, moves more, than the beſt imagined Fable a Poet can invent: —— But then it has ever been eſteemed the beſt Way for a Writer either to fix upon ſuch a Part of Hiſtory as is *ſufficient* for the *main Diſtreſs* of his Tragedy, or to rely wholly on the *Force of his own Invention*, or that of *another*, for the *whole Fable* of his Play: For tho' Hiſtory ſeldom yields a ſufficient *Change* and *Hurry of Events* to form a complete Poem of this Sort, yet thoſe which are ſupply'd are only the ſmaller Incidents, or conſequential Connection of the Whole: But where the Names and Characters of celebrated Perſons are preſerved, the *principal Diſtreſſes* attending them muſt be *known* and *allowed* Facts, or the Audience will, by the manifeſt Violence done the Characters of the Play, be apt to contract an Averſion to every Part of it. In this Reſpect, Sir, you are highly *blameable*; *unhappy* in the Choice of your Subject, I will not ſay, becauſe there ſcarcely appears the *Shadow* of *Choice* in it: For though your Hero has left behind him the Character of a *great Warrior*, and a *Friend to Liberty*, ſo far as it conduced to his *own Advancement*, (the frequent Limit of that Paſſion) yet the Scenes in which you make him *labour* to *perfect your Piece*, have, beſide the Misfortune of being unknown in his Hiſtory, that of being irreconcileable with his Character, unnatural in his Situation, and no way conſequent upon his *former Conduct*.

In this Place it may appear a kind of Inſult on your Subſcribers to cenſure on any Account whatever, a Work of which you enter them *all Patrons*; but as they muſt, for the moſt Part, be ſuppoſed to have ſubſcribed to they knew not what, for Reaſons *well known* to many of them, I muſt beg you will make the neceſſary Apology for me, as you are accountable for whatever Offence I may innocently give them, by ſhewing the Weakneſs of a Performance in which they have ſo ſolidly intereſted themſelves.

Your Fable is not near ſo blameable as your Plot, though you may very juſtly charge me with miſapplying that *Word*; for I am inclinable to think, that had you only *intended* one, ſomewhat more like a Plot muſt have been viſible: The whole that now fills the Place where a Plot ſhould have been, being no more than a Diſcovery that as *Guſtavus* would be ſo obſtinate as to let his Mother die, rather than forfeit his Fame and Dignity, why truly *Chriſtina* would be as croſs as he, and ſooner than —— (I can't tell what, for no Task is aſſign'd her) love her Father's Foe, who ſhe has declared a *tender Paſſion* for all along, ſhe would *run away from him*, tho' *whither*, or for *what View*, does not appear. What makes this *Ghoſt of a Plot* ſtill worſe is, our Lovers never having had one ſingle Opportunity of venting their mutual Paſſion; which much diminiſhes the Concern that would have ariſen from the Diſtreſs of two Perſons of their Worth, whom a long-continued Endearment had render'd tender to each other. For, as they ſcarce, when a-part, acknowledged their Affection, the Audience, or the Reader, can be but very *gently moved* at the Inſucceſs and Diſappointment of a Pair who never had promiſed themſelves one happy Meeting.

The Change of Scene from *Dalecarlia* to *Denmark*, in the ſecond Act, you may, not improbably, defend by *Shakeſpear's* Example; though a very little Thought would have avoided it.

Your principal Women are poorly imagin'd, and as indifferent Uſe is made of them; *Chriſtina* being evidently brought in for no other Reaſon than to ſhew the Spectators a Pair of Petticoats, and *Mariana* is of no other viſible Uſe than to prevent her from being apprehenſive of Spirits by being alone; ſo that every Word they utter ſeems *forced* and *unnatural*, written only to give them an Opportunity to ſhew they can ſpeak.—*Aguſta* and *Guſtava* are introduced for better Purpoſe; but as we owe *them* to *Hiſtory*, it would have done more Honour to your Genius to have made a good Uſe of the Ladies of your *own making*

Having obſerved thus much upon the *proper Buſineſs of your Play*, I ſhall proceed to make a few Remarks on the Execution of the whole, the *Conduct of the Scenes*, the *Agreement* of your *Characters* and *Language*, and the numerous *other Requiſites* of a *Tragedy*, upon which the Succeſs of a Writer more immediately depends in the *Repreſentation*; when the *Hurry of Action* prevents, in many Auditors, their enquiring into the critical Juſtice of the Compoſition, while Errors of a ſmaller Kind are eaſily obſerved.

You open with the chief Lord of *Dalecarlia* coming into the Copper-mines to ſee *one of the Labourers*, who we muſt ſuppoſe too ſtout to come to him, or elſe there would have been no Occaſion for the Viſit; and, what is very remarkable, this ſame ſtrange Miner, who wanted to be *concealed among others*, took it in his Head to be all Night under Ground,

Where reigns eternal Night!

Though he might certainly better have anſwer'd *his Purpoſe of Concealment* by going home to his Lodging; for a Lodging he muſt have had, or the Hiſtorians would never have ſo carefully tranſmitted the Circumſtance of his being *diſcovered by his Landlady's* ſeeing a *laced Veſt* beneath his *Diſguiſe*. Beſides, the Country Curate, who was ſo ſerviceable to *Guſtavus*, was his *Hoſt as ſoon as he knew him*; ſo that he could have little Occaſion to follow him to the Mines, which he had, *before that Time*, left, in Fear of Diſcovery.

The Praiſes of your Hero in the Mouth of *Arnoldus*, are too prophetick; for there is no Manner of Neceſſity for ſuppoſing a Gentleman, who had yet acted in no other Capacity than a *General of Horſe*, a *King*, before he could *think* of that Dignity: But you ſet out with him in your Eye, and have therefore *met* the Hero you ought to have *raiſed*.——And the ſame prophetick Temper prevails, when *Arnoldus*, becauſe *Guſtavus*, whom he calls *the Stranger*, was *wretched*, infers he has

Some mighty Purpoſe in his Breaſt.

Which, *p.* 5. you very ingeniouſly make the *Parſon* find out in his *ſleep*, with as much Aſſiduity in haunting the cold Mines at Dead of Night, &c. as the Country Girls watch each other's Dreaming on a Midſummer Eve.——And having miſtaken Nature in this Inſtance, you unfortunately give way to the *Deluſion*, and make the *Midnight Viſitors* accoſt *Guſtavus* with as much Solemnity as if he were *on the Throne*; and, what is yet more ridiculous, though, I believe, owing to the ſame low Imitation of the often-exploded Tragick Rant, you make, at firſt Sight, *Anderſon* tell him the *Voice of Virtue led him to ſalute him*; and *Guſtavus*, in order to be up with him, ſays he has a wonderful Task for him, which was even *equal to his Virtues*; which, being the firſt Speech he made to *Anderſon*, muſt be known by mere Dint of your Hero's Skill in Phyſiognomy.—— And the ſame romantick Humour prevails when he preſers the *Freedom of being a Slave* under Ground, to that of breathing above it, on a Suppoſition, *p.* 7. ſomewhat correſpondent to the Argument of Serjeant *Kite*, That as they were not viſible, they were ſkreen'd from the *Oppreſſion* that bore heavy upon all the *peopled North*.

Unleſs you ſuppoſe the Curate *Arnoldus*, *Maſter* as well as *Chaplain* to the Mines, how came he to welcome *Arvida*, *p.* 8. as his *noble Gueſt*, will be as difficult as to account for his coming there at that Seaſon.——Your Complaint of the *Inſolence of Ermine*, being plainly ſaid to pleaſe ſuch as have *no Claim* to it, I ſhall defer my Thoughts on that *Humour*, of *deſpiſing Greatneſs becauſe we can't attain it*, till another of the many Opportunities that occur in your Play.

When *Guſtavus*, *p.* 10. magnifies their Deſign to redeem their Country, by ſaying,

A Cauſe like ours is its own Sacrament,
Truth, Juſtice, Reaſon, Love and Liberty,

&c.

Th' eternal Links that clasp the World are in it,
And he who breaks their Sanction, breaks all Law
And infinite Connection.

Arnoldus replies, with the *Importance* of a *Vicar*,

True, my Lord.

To which follows, for what Purpose you may, perhaps, know, the following three Speeches:

Anderson. *And* such *the Force I feel.*
Arvida. *And I.*
Arnoldus. *And all.*

What Force you mean here can never appear to your Reader; since it has no Manner of Connection with, or Relation to the breaking of *infinite Connection*, to which it is immediately re join'd: But I am apt to think that the radiant Dazzling of the Words, *Truth, Love* and *Liberty*, prevented your seeing clearly for some Time, else *Gustavus* would never have been forced to lay his

——Forfeit Head
Became the Price of CROWNS:

Since his Importance was then but *little known*, and his *Fame* had scarcely reach'd its Dawn; for though among some *other Lords* he escap'd the *Proscription* in which he was included, he had never had so much as an *Opportunity* of putting himself in *Competition with Crowns*, however his Courage and Ambition might afterwards exalt him.

I am not displeased at your making your Hero virtuous: And,

To pour his Blaze of Virtue through their Souls,

is a flaming Expression indeed, but, surely, not a *proper one* in this Place, where *Courage* seem'd *every Virtue* necessary to favour their Attempts.—But you are in such Raptures, that, to give your Hero every Perfection, you have even made him a *singing Bird*, p. 12.

O blessed VOICE!
Prolong that NOTE.——

And *Arvida*'s setting himself a Task, and entering on the Execution of it, without one Word of Advice or Approbation from any of the Company, is as extraordinary as his Jealousy of *Gustavus* with a Lady neither of them appear to have spoken to, and the latter's fishing for *Christina*'s Name amidst such a Conflict as must be supposed to actuate him at that Time, when the Redemption of his Country was resolv'd on, but every Means to accomplish it was to seek.

Nat. Lee sometimes is thought inimitable in his wild Rant, but you have certainly in the End of this *first Act* far out-done him, by making *Gustavus* persuade his Friends, that what he has said to them must certainly have enabled them to *tread lighter*; a natural Effect, indeed, of a *musical Note*, but not of a Resolution to free an injured People. In the same Strain with which is your excellent Tag;

On us the Eyes of future Ages wait,
And this Day's Arm strikes forth decisive Fate.
This Day that shall for ever sink or save,
And make each Swede *a Monarch or a Slave.*

What the *Day's Arm* means I cannot guess; nor what is intended by this same Day's *saving* or *sinking* for ever; though Liberty you have surely sufficiently exalted by supposing a whole *Kingdom of Monarchs*, all upon one *equal Establishment*.——Such a Day may properly enough merit Mr. *Fielding*'s Chorus, (some Time since ridiculously cited by the *Whitefriars* Champion)

This is the Day, in Days of Yore,
Our Fathers never saw before:
This is the Day, to one 'tis ten,
Our Sons shall never see again.

The remaining four Acts I shall take another Opportunity to consider, and am, in the mean Time,

Temple, May 15. 1739. *Your humble Servant,*

ALG. SIDNEY.

HOME PORTS.

Portsmouth, May 18. Since my last came in the Ottley, Beach, from St. Christopher's for London; and the St. George, Wright, from Ostend for Gibraltar. Sailed to Spithead his Majesty's Ship the Salisbury, Capt. Osbourne; also are sailed the Industry Sloop, Ring, and the Willing Mind, Mennell, both for Havre de Grace: Also on Wednesday last sailed from Spithead for the River the Jamaica Frigate, Smith. Remain at Spithead his Majesty's Ships the Augusta, Oxford, Salisbury, Shoreham and Gibraltar, and Sloop Cruisers and the Queen Caroline, Birkhead, from Mocha. Wind at East.

Deal, May 19. Wind N. E. His Majesty's Ships remain in the Downs as per my last.

The Pine Apple, Harrow, from Africa is arrived at Antigua.

LONDON.

Yesterday the Rev. Dr. Greenwood preach'd before his Majesty, the Duke and the Princesses Amelia and Caroline, at the Chapel Royal at St. James's.

The Sword of State was carried before his Majesty to and from the Chapel by the Right Hon. the Earl of Harborough.

Her Royal Highness the Princess Mary is taken ill of the Measles, and is attended by some of his Majesty's Physicians.

And her Royal Highness the Princess Louisa, who has been lately ill of that Distemper, is now perfectly recover'd.

A few Days since arriv'd here from Newsoundland, —— Savage, Esq; Grandson of Sir George Savage, of Bloxworth in Dorsetshire, in order to take Possession of the Estate and Title of the late Earl Rivers, deceas'd.

Yesterday the Right Hon. the Lord Baltimore, one of the Lords of the Bed-Chamber to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, and Proprietor of Maryland, embark'd on board the Princess Augusta at Deptford for Petersburg, and from thence to Maryland; and Mr. Erasmus King, a Mathematician, embark'd with his Lordship.

Last Friday Night the Corpse of the Lady Wolstenholme, Relict of Sir John Wolstenholme, Bart. who died a few Days since at her Seat at Enfield, was, after lying in State, interr'd in the Family Vault in that Parish, near the Remains of her Husband.

The Palace of Hampton-Court has been ready some Time to receive his Majesty, the Duke, and the Princesses; as is also that of Kensington. The Week that the Parliament rises, his Majesty will remove to the latter, and to Hampton-Court in the Hunting-Season.

Yesterday died at his House in Oxford-Road, Capt. Parsons, of the First Troop of Life-Guards.

Edward Gostwick, Esq; Brother to Sir William Gostwick, Bart has obtained the Patent for Comptroller of his Majesty's Port of Boston in Lincolnshire, in the Room of Daniel Lacky, Esq; who has resign'd.

Last Friday the City of London began their Suit against John Wightman, Esq; Citizen and Brewer, on Account of his refusing to take upon him the Office of Sheriff of this City when chosen, and called upon to give Bond to execute the same.

Last Saturday died at his House in Finch Lane, Cornhil, Mr. Henry Davey, an eminent and wealthy Norwich Factor.

BANKRUPTS.

Emanuel Tucker, of Hatherleigh, in the County of Devon, Serge-maker.

John Vaughan, late of Lombard-street, London, Apothecary.

		Morning	Evening
High Water this Day at London Bridge.	}	10 17	10 46

Bank Stock 142. India 169. South Sea 99 7-8ths. Old Annuity 111 3-4ths. New Ditto 111 3-4ths. Three per Cent 105 5-8ths. Seven per Cent. Loan 110 1-4th. Five per Cent. ditto 93 1-half. Royal Assurance 100. London Assurance 12 1-half. African 13 1-half. India Bonds 61. 10 s. Prem. South Sea ditto 21. 19. Premium. Bank Circulation 21. 17 s. 6 d. Premium. Salt Tallies 1-half to 1 1-half Prem. English Copper 3 l. 5 s. Welsh ditto 15 s. Three 1-half per Cent. Exchequer Orders 5 per Cent. Premium. Three per Cent. ditto 1-half to 1-4th per Cent. Discount Million Bank 121 1-4th.

General Post-Office, May 12. 1739.

WHEREAS several Bills and Notes have been taken upon the Person who lately robb'd the Western Mail, and are now in the Hands of the Justice of the Peace who committed him to Exeter Gaol, The Post-Master General thinks it necessary to acquaint the Publick, that any Person or Persons who expected or have had an Account of Bills to be sent them by the said Mail, may hear of them at the General Post-Office.

By Order of the Post-Masters General.

J. D. BAREUT, Secretary.

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Which will begin to be sold very cheap, the Price fixed in each Book, on Thursday the 24th of May, 1739.

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